

THE INFLUENCE OF GUANXI ON CHINESE BUSINESS PRACTICES IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study conducted an in-depth literature review on the influence of guanxi, or social networks and typical kinship relationships in Chinese culture, on Chinese business practices in the international market. However, it is important to note that cultural differences between Chinese business practices and those of other countries can result in misunderstandings and conflicts in the implementation of guanxi in an international context. Through a synthesis and analysis of various related studies, this article seeks to identify the characteristics of guanxi, analyze its impact on various aspects of Chinese business practices, and discuss the challenges and implications for Chinese companies in navigating the global market. This research uses a qualitative method, precisely a systematic literature review, by collecting, reviewing, and synthesizing findings from various relevant literature sources, with data taken from a trusted Scopus database. The results show that guanxi plays a significant role in business strategy, relationship management, information acquisition, and resource mobilization for Chinese companies, but it can also pose challenges in adapting to different international business practices. These findings indicate the need for a more comprehensive understanding of guanxi dynamics in a global context to maximize the potential and minimize risks for Chinese companies in entering the international market.

Keywords: International Business, Guanxi, Cross-Cultural Relations, Chinese Business Practices, Business Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Guanxi, as a concept of interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture, has had a significant impact on business practices, especially in an international context. This concept not only encompasses social networks, but also involves the ethical values that underlie business interactions. Research shows that guanxi can serve as a strategic tool for building trust and collaboration between companies, which is especially important in the context of complex and dynamic markets. In this context, (M. S. Chen & Eweje, 2019; Sima et al., 2024; S. Zhang, 2023) guanxi not only contributes

to business performance, but also affects the way companies adapt to the changing business environment. (Ni et al., 2024; Xie & Li, 2021)

One of the important aspects of guanxi is its ability to improve relationships between companies. Research shows that guanxi can strengthen trust between parties in business relationships, which in turn can improve the performance and innovation of the company. For example, in the context of (X. Liu et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022; Rong et al., 2021) the e-commerce industry, a strong guanxi with suppliers can improve market performance and facilitate access to necessary resources. In addition, (Niu et al., 2020; Su et al., 2023) guanxi also plays a role in talent development and human resource management, where good interpersonal relationships can help in the recruitment and development process of employees. (Shen et al., 2022; S. Zhang, 2023)

However, it is important to note that guanxi also has its own challenges, especially in the context of ethics and integrity. In some cases, the practice of guanxi can lead to unethical behavior, such as nepotism or corruption, which can harm the company's reputation. Therefore, companies need to develop an ethical approach to building (Nguyen et al., 2022; Nolan & Rowley, 2020) guanxi, emphasizing values such as trust and empathy to ensure that the relationships built are not only business-beneficial but also contribute to broader social well-being. (Berweger et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023)

In addition, challenges also arise when guanxi is implemented in the context of international business. The differences in Chinese culture and business practices with other countries can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, foreign investors often have a more transactional approach, focusing on short-term profits, as opposed to the characteristics of guanxi which is more oriented towards long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. Therefore, a deep understanding of (Su et al., 2023; C. Zhang et al., 2024) guanxi is essential for Chinese businessmen who want to do business in the international market, so that they can adapt their strategies to local norms and practices. (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022; Rong et al., 2021)

Guanxi, as a fundamental concept in Chinese business practices, plays a very important role in the context of international trade and investment. Known as the "heart" of Chinese business, guanxi reflects interpersonal relationships built on Confucian principles, such as trust, loyalty, and reciprocity. This concept encompasses a set of norms and practices that make up social networks that are used to achieve personal and organizational goals. In the context of business, guanxi can be classified into three main categories: family guanxi, intermediary guanxi, and business guanxi. Among the three categories, business guanxi is considered the most relevant in Chinese business practices in the international market. (Sima et al., 2024; S. Zhang, 2023)

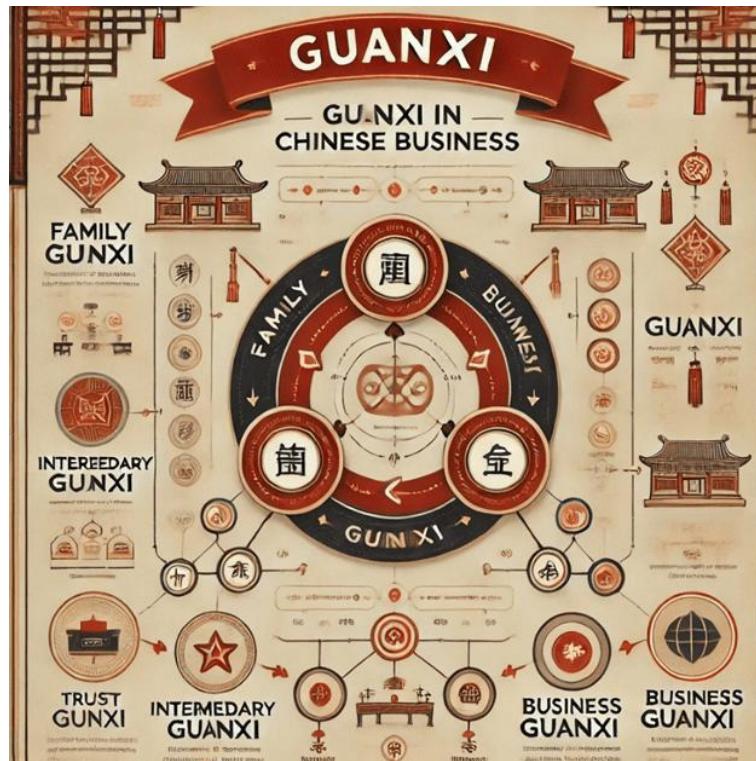


Figure 1. The Three Main Categories of Guanxi

Guanxi business has several significant advantages for Chinese companies. First, guanxi makes it easy to access the information needed for quick and accurate decision-making. In a competitive business environment, the ability to obtain accurate and up-to-date information is essential. In addition, (Chu et al., 2020; L. S. Lee & Zhong, 2021) guanxi can also speed up the decision-making process, as strong relationships between business partners allow for more open and transparent discussions. It also contributes to increased coordination and collaboration between companies, which in turn builds trust and commitment in business cooperation. (Rong et al., 2021; Xie & Li, 2021) (X. Liu et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2022)

Research shows that guanxi not only serves as a tool to achieve business goals, but also plays a role in creating added value for all parties involved. For example, in the relationship between buyers and suppliers, guanxi can improve business outcomes by strengthening trust and facilitating a more effective exchange of information. In addition, guanxi can also serve as a strategy to overcome uncertainty in a dynamic business environment, allowing companies to adapt quickly to market changes. (Ni and a (Abosag et al., 2021; C. Zhang et al., 2024) l., 2024; Orra, 2021)

In conclusion, guanxi is a very important concept in Chinese business practices, especially in the context of international markets. By understanding and applying the principles of guanxi, Chinese companies can leverage interpersonal relationships to achieve competitive advantage and long-term success in both international and global markets.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the above background, this literature review will answer questions about:

1. What is the role of guanxi in influencing the business practices of Chinese companies in the international market?

2. What are the benefits and challenges that Chinese companies face in implementing guanxi in the international market?
3. How can Chinese companies effectively manage guanxi to improve business performance in the international market?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Analyze the role of guanxi in influencing the business practices of Chinese companies in the international market.
2. Identify the benefits and challenges faced by Chinese companies in implementing guanxi in the international market.
3. Formulating a strategy for Chinese companies to effectively manage guanxi to improve business performance in the international market.

1.4 Research Significance

This literature review is expected to make a significant contribution both theoretically and practically. From a theoretical point of view, this study aims to enrich the literature on the influence of Chinese culture, especially the concept of guanxi, on the company's business practices in the international market. Guanxi is not only relevant in the local Chinese context, but it also has important implications in cross-cultural interactions in international markets. By exploring the relationship between guanxi and international business strategy, this research is expected to bridge the gap between theory and practice and provide a new foundation for future studies in the same field.

From a practical point of view, the results of this study are expected to provide applicable insights for Chinese and non-Chinese companies operating in the international market, in understanding and adapting the concept of guanxi to build and maintain effective and sustainable business relationships. In addition, this research can also provide guidance for business people in integrating the concept of guanxi into marketing, negotiation, and customer relationship management strategies in the international market, thus enabling the creation of mutually beneficial and long-term sustainable business relationships.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Protocol Review

This research is a literature study that aims to examine the role of guanxi in Chinese business practices in the international market. To achieve the research objectives, a comprehensive analysis was carried out using a qualitative method, precisely a systematic literature review, on various literature sources relevant to the research topic. These sources are collected through the search of electronic databases, such as Scopus. Content analysis is carried out to identify, classify, and synthesize important information from various sources, so as to answer the formulation of research problems as a whole, as well as provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of guanxi in the international business context based on reliable academic sources.

2.2 Search Strategy

The search is carried out through the Scopus database, where this database is quite comprehensive, as it provides access to various types of scientific publications, such as journals,

books, and other scientific publications. All articles used in this systematic review have gone through a peer review process, which guarantees academic quality and validity. The search began by using common keywords related to the topic, such as "Guanxi" and "Business" in the Scopus database that showed search results for 675 documents.

2.3 Study Selection

The initial search was done by including keywords such as "guanxi" and "business". The selection process of library sources is carried out systematically and critically, where all search results are selected and filtered based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been set, as in table 1, with the following criteria: year of publication, language, subject area, and document type. Only sources that meet the inclusion criteria will be considered for inclusion in this literature review.

2.4 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

To filter the articles that are most relevant to this literature review, inclusion and exclusion criteria are applied to the search results. The author decided to only use articles published in the form of scientific journals because journals are considered to have validity as "certified knowledge". Therefore, articles such as conference papers, books, book chapters, or others are not included in the analysis. In the context of this criterion, the author also sets a deadline for publishing articles, which is between 2019 and 2024. This restriction aims to ensure that the article being analyzed is the latest version, so that the concepts and theories discussed remain relevant and support the research.

Criteria	Inclusions	Exclusion
Year of Publication	2019-2024	Beyond 2019-2024
Language	English	Non English
Subject Areas	Business, Management, and Accounting	Non Business, Management and Accounting
Document Type	Article	Non Articles

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Of the 675 documents from the Scopus database that appeared as initial search results, a further screening process was carried out based on the year of publication, resulting in 185 documents. After that, these documents are further sorted by subject field, leaving 125 documents. The next screening process was carried out based on the type of document, leaving a total of 97 articles. Furthermore, the articles are evaluated based on their quality to ensure only articles relevant to the topic and research problem are selected. In the final stage, 59 articles were obtained that met all the criteria and were worthy of being used as the main reference in this study.

2.5 Prisma Flow Diagram

The entire selection process can be seen through the following PRISMA diagram flow:

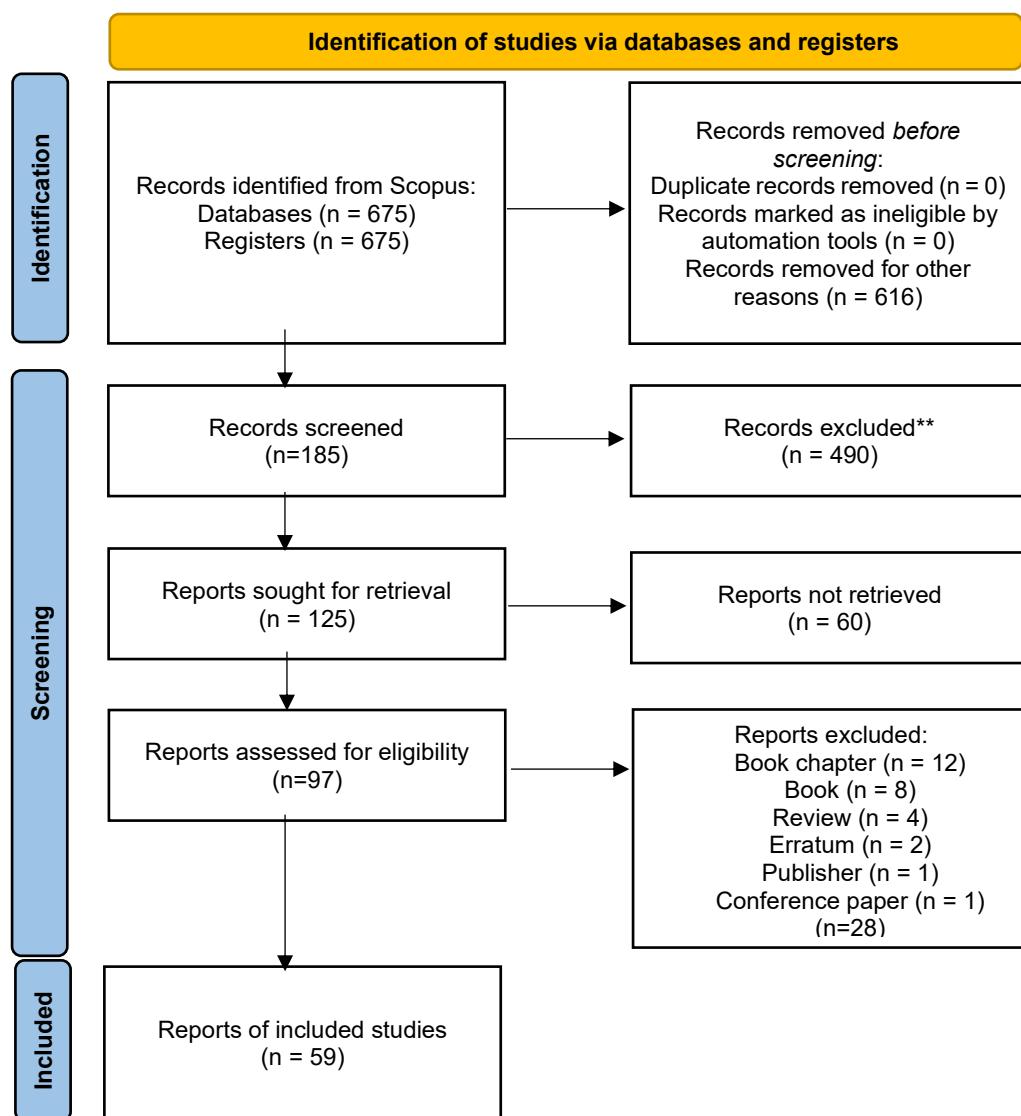


Figure 2. PRISMA SLR: “guanxi” and “business”

2.6 Quality Assessment Criteria

In addition to using inclusion and exclusion criteria, this study also applies article quality assessment to ensure the relevance and credibility of the sources used. This assessment is based on three main criteria. First, the suitability of the research topic, i.e. the article should specifically discuss the influence of guanxi on Chinese business practices in the international market. Second, the quality of the methodology, where the article must use an appropriate and systematic methodological approach in analyzing related issues. Third, comprehensive analysis, which requires the article to present an in-depth and thorough discussion of the research topic. The above criteria can be formulated into several questions as shown in table 2.

Quality Criteria

1. Is "guanxi" clearly stated?
2. Is the concept of "guanxi" related to the business context?
3. Is the research methodology or method adequately described?
4. Are the research objectives clearly defined?
5. Are the research findings presented in a logical, analytical, and related manner to the concept of guanxi with business practices?

Table 2. Quality Criteria

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Studies

In this section, the articles referenced in this study will be grouped based on several criteria, including the source of publication, the year of publication, the highest number of citations, and the main topic discussed. Here are the descriptive statistics generated:

Source	Quantity	Percentage
Asia Pacific Business Review	2	3.39%
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	3	5.08%
British Journal of Management	1	1.69%
Chinese Management Studies	1	1.69%
Cogent Business & Management	1	1.69%
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	1	1.69%
Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society	1	1.69%
Cross Cultural & Strategic Management	2	3.39%
Culture and Organization	1	1.69%
Decision Support Systems	1	1.69%
Emerging Markets Review	1	1.69%
Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management	1	1.69%
Entrepreneurship Research Journal	1	1.69%
Frontiers in Psychology	1	1.69%
Humanities and Social Sciences Communications	1	1.69%
Industrial Marketing Management	4	6.78%
International Business Review	1	1.69%
International Journal of Asian Business and Information Management	1	1.69%
International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics	2	3.39%
International Journal of Emerging Markets	2	3.39%
International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications	1	1.69%
International Journal of Market Research	1	1.69%
Journal of Asia Business Studies	1	1.69%

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Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing	5	8.47%
Journal of Business and Psychology	1	1.69%
Journal of Business Ethics	1	1.69%
Journal of Business Research	1	1.69%
Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	1	1.69%
Journal of Corporate Finance	1	1.69%
Journal of East-West Business	1	1.69%
Journal of Family Business Strategy	1	1.69%
Journal of Innovation & Knowledge	1	1.69%
Journal of International Business Studies	2	3.39%
Journal of International Marketing	1	1.69%
Journal of Organizational Behavior	1	1.69%
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	1	1.69%
Journal of Small Business Strategy	1	1.69%
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	1	1.69%
Management and Organization Review	1	1.69%
Management Decision	1	1.69%
Personnel Review	1	1.69%
Research in International Business and Finance	1	1.69%
Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal	1	1.69%
Technical Bulletin	1	1.69%
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	1	1.69%
Total	59	100%

Table 3. Source of Publication

Based on the data in table 3, the distribution of articles from various sources shows diverse contributions in the literature of this study. The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing accounted for the most articles with 8.47% (5 articles), marking a significant influence on the topics discussed. In addition, Industrial Marketing Management also makes an important contribution of 6.78% (4 articles). Other sources, such as the Asia Pacific Journal of Management and the International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics, accounted for 5.08% and 3.39%, respectively. This indicates the broad dissemination of research and balanced contributions from various platforms.

Year	Quantity	Percentage
2019	4	6.78%
2020	7	11.86%
2021	13	22.03%
2022	7	11.86%
2023	6	10.17%
2024	22	37.29%
Total	59	100%

Table 4. Years of Publication

The distribution of articles by year shows that 2024 dominates with the largest contribution of 37.29% (22 articles). The year 2021 is also significant with 22.03% (13 articles). The contribution

from 2020 and 2022 was 11.86% (7 articles) respectively. Meanwhile, in 2019 it had a smaller contribution of 6.78% (4 articles). This variation reflects an increased focus on research related to the topics covered in recent years.

Cites	Authors	Title	Year
65	Chen M, Xiao J, Zhao Y	Confucianism, successor choice, and firm performance in family firms: Evidence from China	2021
38	Nolan J, Rowley C	Whither guanxi and social networks in China? A review of theory and practice	2020
31	Niu Y, Deng F, Hao A	Effect of entrepreneurial orientation, collectivistic orientation and swift Guanxi with suppliers on market performance: A study of e-commerce enterprises	2020
25	Chung H	How guanxi networking matters in the relation between market orientation and innovation in Asian emerging economies – the case of Markor	2019
25	Butt A. Shah S, Sheikh A	Is guanxi important in a buyer-supplier relationship? Case of Chinese logistics industry	2020
23	Du J, Zhou C	Does guanxi matter in the foreign expansion of Chinese manufacturing firms? The mediator role of linking and leveraging	2019
21	Chen W, Han C, Wang L, Ieromonachou P, Lu X	Recognition of entrepreneur's social ties and firm innovation in emerging markets: explanation from the industrial institutional environment and survival pressure	2021
20	Shen L, Zhou K, Zhang C	Is Interpersonal Guanxi Beneficial in Fostering Interfirm Trust? The Contingent Effect of Institutional- and Individual-Level Characteristics	2022
18	Xie B, Li M	Coworker Guanxi and job performance: Based on the	2021

18	Liu C	mediating effect of interpersonal trust Creating competitive advantage through network ties, entrepreneurial orientation and intellectual capital	2021
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Table 5. Most Quotes

The most cited article is a work with 65 citations, discussing M. Chen et al. (2021) Confucianism, successor choice, and firm performance in family firms: Evidence from China. Other significant articles include 38 citations, and 31 citations. These articles show a major impact on the literature, covering topics such as Nolan & Rowley (2020) Niu et al. (2020) guanxi, innovation, and market performance in various business contexts.

Topics	Quantity	Percentage
Guanxi and Business Performance	15	25.42%
Cultural Implications of Guanxi	10	16.95%
Guanxi in an International Context	8	13.56%
Guanxi and Human Resource Management	6	10.17%
Guanxi and Innovation	5	8.47%
Others	15	25.42%
Total	59	100%

Table 6. Key Topics Discussed

The most discussed topic was "Guanxi and Business Performance" with 25.42% (15 articles), highlighting the importance of this relationship in influencing a company's results. "Cultural Implications of Guanxi" came in second place with 16.95% (10 articles), followed by Guanxi in the International Context at 13.56% (8 articles). Other contributions, such as "Guanxi and Innovation" of 8.47% (5 articles), show the diversity of approaches to the discussion of guanxi in the research.

An analysis of these 59 articles reveals the existence of a strong and growing literature on guanxi, emphasizing its crucial role in business relations, performance, and cultural dynamics. The increasing number of publications year over year shows a growing recognition of the importance of guanxi in the context of domestic and international business. It also shows that the main topic that is most discussed is the relationship between guanxi and business performance, followed by the cultural implications of guanxi.

3.2 Tematik Synthesis

In this section, the main findings of the article studied will be summarized and synthesized based on the themes that emerge. Here is a thematic synthesis of some relevant research.

1. Guanxi and Business Performance

Many studies show that guanxi plays an important role in improving business performance. For example, emphasizing the relationship between the strategic Sima et al. (2024) guanxi network and B2B export performance, showing that strong relationships can improve business outcomes in emerging markets. In addition, research by shows that Niu et al. (2020) interpersonal guanxi has a positive impact on business performance, with relationship learning as a mediator. This shows that

guanxi not only serves as a tool for building relationships, but also as a key factor in achieving business goals.

2. Cultural Implications of Guanxi

Cultural values, such as trust, empathy, and respect, are deeply integrated in the practice of guanxi. M. S. Chen & Eweje (2019) proposes a model of ethical guanxi rooted in Confucian values, in which xinyong (trust) and lijie (empathy) are the basis for building strong and sustainable relationships. This shows that guanxi is not only about business profits, but also about building respectful and ethical relationships.

3. Guanxi in an International Context

Guanxi is not only limited to the domestic context, but it also has international implications. C.-H. (Sam) Liu (2021) examining how guanxi was used by African nomads returning from China to collaborate with Chinese partners in Africa, showed that guanxi can transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. This research shows that the understanding and application of guanxi can help in building strong business relationships in the international market.

4. Guanxi and Human Resource Management

Guanxi also has significant implications in human resource management practices, especially in the context of recruitment and talent development. Nolan & Rowley (2020) explores guanxi in talent management in China, showing that interpersonal relationships can influence employee hiring and development decisions. Research by Du & Zhou (2019) further identifies how guanxi and entrepreneur competencies affect growth aspirations in the context of small businesses, highlighting the importance of relationships in achieving organizational goals.

5. Guanxi and Innovation

Innovation is another area where guanxi has shown significant influence. Butt et al. (2020) found that Guanxi networks contribute to innovation in emerging markets, by demonstrating that market orientation and responsiveness have a positive impact on innovation. This shows that guanxi can serve as a catalyst for innovation, especially in complex and dynamic business contexts.

6. Guanxi and Business Ethics

The ethical aspect in guanxi is also an important concern in research. Niu et al. (2020) proposed an ethical guanxi model based on Confucian values, emphasizing the importance of trust and empathy in building sustainable business relationships. This shows that guanxi is not only about business profits, but also about building mutually beneficial and ethical relationships.

7. Guanxi as a Social Network

Guanxi is often considered an important social network in the context of Chinese business. Chu et al. (2020) emphasizing that in a dynamic business environment, Guanxi is considered very significant to achieve entrepreneurial success. This research shows that strong and mutually beneficial relationships between individuals within the guanxi network can provide access to the resources necessary for business growth.

3.3 Bibliometric Analysis

This study utilizes VOSviewer version 1.6.20 to analyze bibliographic data that includes information such as titles, authors, and journals. This tool is used to assess research gaps, identify dominant references, and find research opportunities in specific areas. VOSviewer is considered a useful tool for researchers to analyze research trends and identify new opportunities.

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After going through the PRISMA selection process, a total of 59 articles were selected to be analyzed using VOSviewer. The analysis yielded 5 clusters, 191 links, and 225 total link strengths, which were grouped based on words from article titles and keywords.

Bibliometric analysis includes three types of visualizations: network, overlay, and density. Network visualization displays a network of relationships between terms, whereas overlay visualization shows changes in research topics over time, while density visualization highlights underexplored areas of research, providing opportunities for further research.

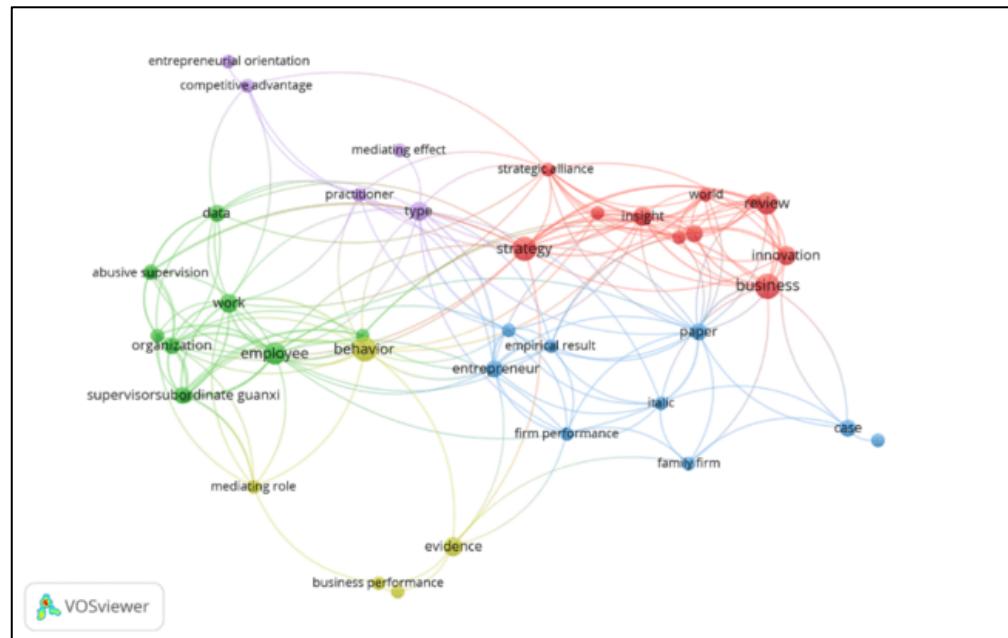


Figure 3. Network Visualization 59 Articles

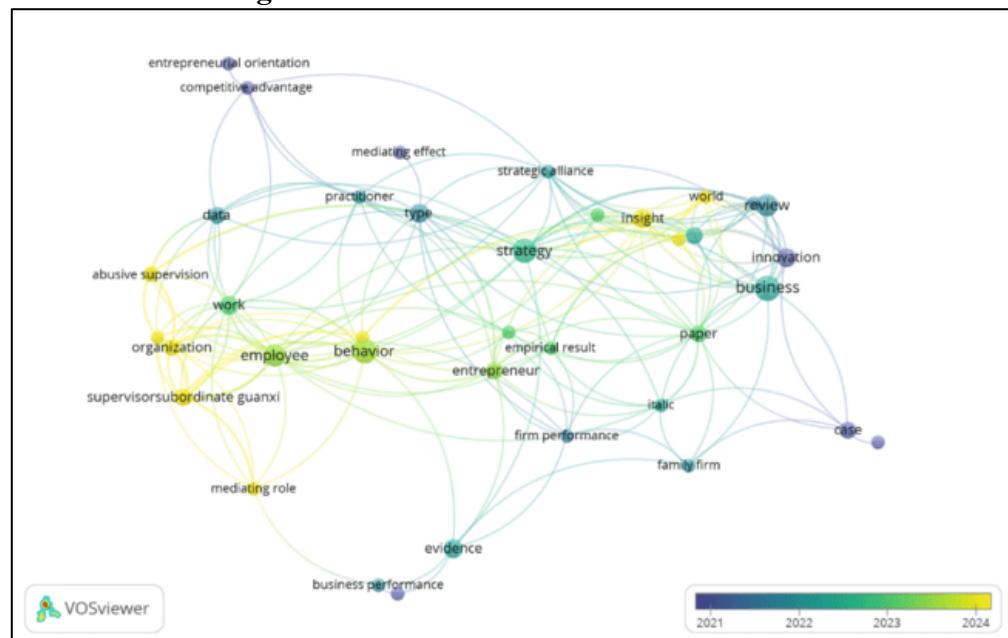


Figure 4. Overlay Visualization 59 Articles

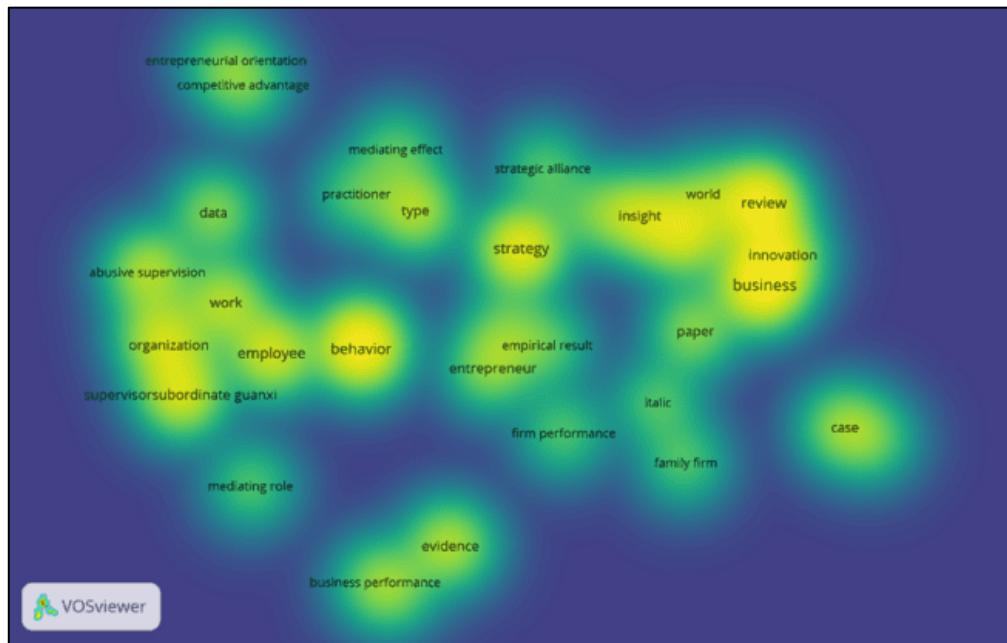


Figure 5. Density Visualization 59 Articles

After analyzing using VOSviewer Type Data, then creating a map based on the text data, the data is retrieved from a reference file exported in RIS format from the Mendeley Library. The analysis was carried out by selecting fields from the title and abstract using the binary counting calculation method.

In the analysis process, the threshold is set at the minimum number of occurrences of a term 2, which results in 66 out of 657 terms meeting these criteria. Furthermore, as many as 60% of the 66 terms were selected based on their relevance, leaving 40 terms for further analysis.

There are 5 clusters resulting from the above analysis, which can be seen in table 7.

Cluster	Item
Cluster 1 - Red (11 items)	antecedent, business, challenge, innovation, insight, operation, relationship management, review, strategic alliance, strategy, world
Cluster 2 - Green (10 items)	abusive supervision, data, data analysis, employee, organization, power, service, subordinate, supervisorsubordinate guanxi, work
Cluster 3 - Blue (9 items)	buyer supplier relationship, case, empirical result, entrepreneur, family firm, firm performance, italic, paper, resource
Cluster 4 - Yellow (5 items)	behavior, business performance, evidence, mediating role, moderating role
Cluster 5 - Purple (5 items)	competitive advantage, entrepreneur orientation, mediating effect, practitioner, type

Table 7. Cluster Distribution of VOSviewer Analysis Results

3.4 Network Analysis

Network visualization of the bibliometric map in this guanxi study shows that there are five main clusters that group key concepts. The first cluster, the most prominent, includes strategic terms such as strategy, relationship management, and strategic alliances. Research shows that guanxi plays an important role in building strategic alliances and effective relationship management, which in turn

can improve organizational performance. In this context, it emphasizes the importance of (Butt et al., 2020; Sima et al., 2024) Sima et al. (2024) the guanxi network in marketing strategies and export performance, while pointing out the relevance Butt et al. (2020) of guanxi in the relationship between buyers and suppliers in the logistics industry.

The second cluster focuses on behavioral and relational aspects in organizations. Research by showing that Ju et al. (2024) the proximity of guanxi can affect the well-being of workers in construction projects, indicating that strong interpersonal relationships can improve team dynamics and individual performance. In addition, research by highlighted the role of interpersonal trust in improving job performance, which showed that Xie & Li (2021) guanxi not only serves as a networking tool but also as a factor influencing work behavior.

The third cluster is related to the company's performance and resources. Research by showing that Guo et al. (2020) guanxi can moderate the relationship between R&D investment and business performance, highlighting the importance of social connections in business contexts. In addition, it revealed that X. Liu et al. (2023) guanxi contributes to the growth aspirations of small companies in the tourism sector, showing that strong relationships can be an important strategic resource.

The fourth cluster explores the role of mediation and moderation in influencing business performance. Research by shows that Rong et al. (2021) guanxi can mediate brand results in sales channel relationships, while research by highlights how Khan et al. (2023) guanxi between superiors and subordinates can affect employees' work behavior. This shows that guanxi not only serves as a network but also as a factor that influences business outcomes through mediation mechanisms.

The fifth cluster highlights the importance of competitive advantage and entrepreneurial orientation. identified that the entrepreneurial networking style in China is influenced by different norms, which shows that C. Zhang et al. (2024) guanxi can shape entrepreneurial behavior and competitive advantage. Research by also shows that entrepreneurial orientation and Niu et al. (2020) prompt guanxi with suppliers contribute to market performance, confirming that guanxi is an essential element in a successful business strategy.

Overlay visualization shows that research on guanxi has evolved over the past few decades, with the focus shifting from innovation and business relationships to more strategic aspects such as competitiveness and entrepreneurship. This is in line with findings by , which suggest that the use of L. W. Y. Lee et al. (2022) big data in understanding guanxi can provide a better global perspective. However, although much research has been done, the area that has been less explored is the influence of guanxi on business ethics and corporate social responsibility, which is raised by S. Zhang (2023)

Density visualization reveals that most research has focused on the relationship of guanxi to organizational performance, strategy, and resource aspects. However, there is still a lack of research exploring the impact of guanxi on business ethics, which is an important area in the context of corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practices. (S. Zhang, 2023)

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

The results of the bibliometric analysis show that guanxi research has evolved from a narrower focus on interpersonal relationships and behavior to a more strategic and competitive direction. Overall, the main findings can be summarized as follows.

Definition and Characteristics of Guanxi. Guanxi can be defined as a network of interpersonal relationships built through mutual exchange, trust, and mutual obligations, which plays a crucial role in Chinese social and business interactions. The main characteristics of guanxi include familiarity, trust, and mutually beneficial exchanges, all of which contribute to the formation of strong and long-term relationships between individuals or business entities (Rong et al., 2021; Sima et al., 2024; S. Zhang, 2023). Familiarity within guanxi is developed through repeated interactions that gradually foster trust, which is not merely a personal sentiment but a fundamental element enabling smooth business transactions. In buyer-supplier relationships, guanxi functions as a bridge that connects parties and creates added value through more efficient information and resource exchange (Butt et al., 2020; C. Zhang et al., 2024). Empirical studies indicate that strong guanxi relationships can significantly enhance business performance, particularly in complex market environments such as China (Chu et al., 2021; Ni et al., 2024; Chung, 2019; X. Liu et al., 2023). Moreover, guanxi extends beyond personal ties to include inter-organizational relationships, where effective utilization of guanxi facilitates knowledge acquisition and transfer, supporting innovation and competitive advantage. The interaction between guanxi and formal governance structures reflects the distinctive operational model of Chinese firms, which often integrate traditional relational practices with modern business strategies (W. Chen et al., 2021; Ju et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2022; Xie & Li, 2021).

Guanxi in the Context of Chinese Culture. In the context of Chinese culture, guanxi is deeply embedded in both social and business practices and is regarded as a vital strategic resource for accessing information, resources, and business opportunities. Guanxi functions not only as a relationship-building tool but also as a mechanism that enables individuals and organizations to navigate challenges within a complex business environment (Chu et al., 2021; X. Liu et al., 2023; Su et al., 2023). By connecting individuals to broader social networks, guanxi enhances access to critical information and resources necessary for business success, positioning it as a form of social capital that provides competitive advantage. For instance, in China's logistics industry, guanxi relationships between buyer managers and suppliers have been shown to play a key role in establishing mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships (X. Liu et al., 2023; Su et al., 2023; Butt et al., 2020; L. S. Lee & Zhong, 2021). Furthermore, guanxi contributes to ethical development in business practices, as relationships formed through guanxi are often grounded in trust and mutual respect, which support ethical decision-making. Additionally, guanxi serves as a bridge connecting companies with various stakeholders, including governments and business partners, which is increasingly important in a dynamic and evolving market environment (M. S. Chen & Eweje, 2019; Shen et al., 2022; Ju et al., 2024).

Guanxi's Relevance to the International Market Research indicates that guanxi plays a significant role in supporting Chinese companies' expansion into international markets by serving as a strategic tool for building trust, navigating regulations, and addressing

institutional challenges abroad. In this context, guanxi extends beyond interpersonal relationships to form networks that provide access to essential information and resources needed to operate effectively in unfamiliar and complex business environments (Chu et al., 2020; Sima et al., 2024). Trust-building is one of the most critical functions of guanxi, particularly in international business settings where cultural and regulatory differences often create barriers. Studies show that firms with strong guanxi networks are better equipped to manage uncertainty and reduce risks associated with international expansion, while also gaining support in understanding and adapting to local regulations that differ from those in China (Chu et al., 2020; C. Zhang et al., 2024; Butt et al., 2020; X. Liu et al., 2023). Additionally, guanxi helps address institutional challenges by providing access to insights on local business norms, practices, and policies, thereby enhancing firms' competitiveness and increasing their likelihood of success in international markets (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022; Shen et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Guanxi as a Relationship Management Tool. Guanxi functions as an effective relationship management tool that supports the development of strategic alliances, the management of business partner relationships, and coordination within the supply chain. Empirical studies show that strong guanxi relationships can enhance organizational performance, particularly in export- and logistics-related activities, by enabling firms to access critical information and resources required to compete in international markets (Butt et al., 2020; Sima et al., 2024; Ju et al., 2024; S. Zhang, 2023). One of the key contributions of guanxi lies in its ability to foster trust and mutually beneficial relationships between companies and their partners. In supply chain management, guanxi helps mitigate collaboration challenges such as uncertainty and market-related risks. Firms with strong guanxi networks are better positioned to adapt to regulatory and policy changes in foreign markets, which subsequently improves export performance (Chu et al., 2021; X. Liu et al., 2023; L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022; Ni et al., 2024). Furthermore, guanxi plays a significant role in creating value within buyer–supplier relationships. Studies in the logistics industry indicate that strong guanxi between buyer managers and suppliers enhances operational efficiency and generates added value for both parties. By leveraging guanxi, companies can optimize supply chain coordination, which is essential for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the global market (Abosag et al., 2021; L. S. Lee & Zhong, 2021; Butt et al., 2020; Xie & Li, 2021).

Guanxi's Impact on Innovation and Business Strategy. Research findings indicate that guanxi facilitates information flow and knowledge sharing, which are critical drivers of innovation in a rapidly changing business environment. As a social network mechanism, guanxi enables individuals and organizations to access relevant information and exchange knowledge efficiently, thereby strengthening their capacity to innovate and maintain competitive advantage (Sima et al., 2024; Chu et al., 2021). Beyond its role in knowledge sharing, guanxi also influences the formulation of business strategies, including the

development of competitive advantage and entrepreneurial orientation. Firms with strong guanxi networks tend to formulate strategies that are more adaptive and responsive to market changes, allowing them to identify new opportunities and pursue innovative approaches that enhance organizational performance (Nolan & Rowley, 2020; Chu et al., 2021). Moreover, guanxi contributes to the strengthening of entrepreneurial orientation by fostering close relationships with business partners and stakeholders, which improves firms' ability to adapt, innovate, and respond swiftly to evolving customer needs. Consequently, guanxi serves as a key driver of value creation and sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly complex and competitive markets (S. Zhang, 2023; Kang et al., 2024).

Strengthening Networks and Trust. Guanxi can help companies build a wider social network and trusting relationship with business partners in the international market. This is especially important because guanxi serves as a tool to improve access to information, resources, and business opportunities. Research shows that strong guanxi can facilitate the flow of information and knowledge sharing, which in turn can drive innovation. (X. Liu et al., 2023; Sima et al., 2024)

In the context of the international market, guanxi allows companies to develop deeper relationships with business partners, which can increase trust and collaboration. This trust is especially important in complex business environments, where uncertainty and risk are often major challenges. By having a solid guanxi network, companies can more easily access relevant information and resources needed to operate effectively in new markets. (X. Liu et al., 2023; S. Zhang, 2023)

Furthermore, guanxi also plays a role in the formulation of business strategies. By leveraging existing social networks, companies can identify new opportunities and develop strategies that are more responsive to market changes. Research shows that companies that have a strong guanxi orientation tend to be more innovative and able to create a sustainable competitive advantage. In this regard, (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022; Nolan & Rowley, 2020) guanxi not only serves as a social network, but also as a key driver in the development of effective and innovative business strategies.

Increased Competitive Advantage. Research shows that guanxi can contribute to a company's competitive advantage through increased innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, and overall organizational performance. Guanxi, as a strong network of interpersonal relationships, allows companies to access the information and resources necessary to innovate and adapt quickly to market changes. In this context, (X. Liu et al., 2023; Sima et al., 2024) guanxi not only serves as a tool for building relationships, but also as a key driver in the development of innovative business strategies.

One of the ways guanxi contributes to innovation is through better information flow between companies and business partners. Research shows that companies that have a strong guanxi network can more easily get market information and new technologies, which is critical for the development of innovative products and services. In addition, (Chu et al., 2021; X. Liu et al., 2023) guanxi can also improve entrepreneurial orientation by allowing companies to establish strategic partnerships that support growth and expansion. (X. Liu et al., 2023; C. Zhang et al., 2024)

Furthermore, guanxi plays an important role in improving organizational performance. Research shows that companies that make good use of guanxi tend to perform better in terms of sales and profitability, especially in complex markets like China. By leveraging (Guo et al., 2020; L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022) guanxi relationships, companies can reduce risks and improve operational

efficiency, which in turn contributes to a continued competitive advantage. (Guo et al., 2020; Nolan & Rowley, 2020)

- Adaptation to Local Culture

Although guanxi can provide significant benefits to Chinese companies, they also face challenges in adapting to business norms and practices in different international markets. Guanxi, which is a strong network of interpersonal relationships, is often not entirely in line with business practices prevailing in other countries, especially in Western countries that may prioritize formality and transparency in business relationships. (Chu et al., 2020; Sima et al., 2024)

One of the main challenges is the difference in cultural values and business ethics. In Chinese culture, guanxi often involves exchanges that are both personal and informal, which may be considered unethical or unprofessional in an international business context. This can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between Chinese companies and foreign business partners, who may not understand or appreciate the importance of (Ju et al., 2024; X. Liu et al., 2023) guanxi in the Chinese context. (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022)

In addition, Chinese companies also have to adapt to different regulations and policies in the international market. Although guanxi can help in regulatory navigation in China, in international markets, companies may need to adhere to stricter standards and practices, which are not always in line with the guanxi-based (Nolan & Rowley, 2020; S. Zhang, 2023) approach. This can create additional challenges in building trusting and effective relationships with business partners outside of China.

Research also suggests that companies that rely on guanxi as their sole strategy may face risks in the long run, especially if they are unable to adapt to broader business norms and practices in international markets. Therefore, it is important for Chinese companies to develop a more holistic approach that combines (Guo et al., 2020; Rong et al., 2021) guanxi with more formal and transparent business practices to achieve success in the global market. (Butt et al., 2020)

Dependence on Individual Relationships. Guanxi that relies too much on individual relationships can pose risks, especially when there is a change or change of personnel in the organization. When a guanxi relationship is highly dependent on a particular individual, the loss of that individual either due to resignation, retirement, or other reasons can result in the loss of access to social networks and resources that were previously available. This can disrupt the continuity of business relationships and affect the overall performance of the organization. (Sima et al., 2024)

Research shows that a high reliance on individual guanxi can create instability in business relationships. In this context, companies may have difficulty in rebuilding the same network after losing key individuals, which can result in a loss of trust and collaboration with business partners. In addition, changes in leadership or organizational structure can affect the existing (X. Liu et al., 2023) dynamics of guanxi, so it takes time and effort to rebuild the same relationship. (Chu et al., 2020)

Furthermore, reliance on individual guanxi can hinder the systematic and formal development of business relationship management. Companies that rely too heavily on personal relationships may overlook the importance of building formal structures and processes that can support the sustainability of business relationships. This can result in greater risk in the face of market changes and other external challenges. (S. Zhang, 2023)

Therefore, it is important for Chinese companies to develop a more balanced approach to utilizing guanxi. Although guanxi remains a valuable asset, companies should strive to integrate these relationships into a more formal and systematic framework to ensure sustainability and stability in their business relationships. In this way, companies can minimize the risks associated with dependency on individuals and increase their resilience in the face of change. (Abosag et al., 2021)

- A Systematic Approach to Building and Maintaining Guanxi

Enterprises can adopt a more systematic and structured approach in building and maintaining the guanxi network, such as developing clear protocols and processes. This approach is important to ensure that the guanxi relationship does not only depend on a specific individual, but can also be maintained and expanded in the long term. With clear protocols in place, companies can manage guanxi relationships more effectively, reduce the risks associated with dependency on individuals, and increase stability in their social networks. (Sima et al., 2024)

One way to implement this approach is to develop a system that allows the recording and monitoring of existing guanxi relationships. By using technology and data analytics, companies can identify and manage the most valuable relationships, as well as evaluate the impact of those relationships on business performance. Research shows that companies that adopt a data-driven approach in (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022) guanxi management can do better at optimizing their networks and increasing innovation. (C. Zhang et al., 2024)

In addition, companies can also train their employees to understand the importance of guanxi and how to build it effectively. Education and training on the underlying cultural values of guanxi, as well as skills in building relationships, can help create an environment that supports the development of a broader and sustainable guanxi network. In this way, companies will not only strengthen existing relationships, but also be able to expand their network to potential new business partners. (Ni et al., 2024)

Empirical Studies on Successful Guanxi

The analysis of empirical cases can provide valuable insights into effective guanxi practices in international markets, including adaptation strategies, risk management, and capability development. Research shows that guanxi not only serves as a tool for building relationships, but also as a factor that can affect the overall performance of an organization in a global context. (Chu et al., 2020; Sima et al., 2024)

One of the important aspects of guanxi is its ability to adapt to different business norms and practices in the international market. In this context, companies that successfully develop effective guanxi often do so by tailoring their approach to business relationships according to local culture and partner expectations. For example, companies can adopt more open and transparent communication practices to build trust with international partners, which may differ from the more informal approaches commonly used in China. (Rong et al., 2021; S. Zhang, 2023) (Ju et al., 2024)

Risk management is also an important factor in the practice of guanxi in the international market. Companies need to understand that an over-reliance on individual relationships can pose risks, especially when there is a change in the organization or business environment. Therefore, a good risk management strategy should include the diversification of (M. S. Chen & Eweje, 2019) the guanxi network and the development of more formal and systematic relationships to ensure sustainability and stability in business relationships. (Butt et al., 2020)

In addition, the development of organizational capabilities through guanxi is also very important. Companies that are able to utilize guanxi to increase innovation and entrepreneurial orientation tend to have better performance in international markets. By building a (Ni et al., 2024; C. Zhang et al., 2024) strong guanxi network , companies can access the knowledge and resources necessary to quickly adapt to market changes and create added value for their customers. (X. Liu et al., 2023)

3.5.2 Implied Theory

The theoretical implications of this literature review include several important aspects that can enrich our understanding of the dynamics of business relations in Chinese culture and their impact on internationalization strategies. Guanxi, which refers to a network of interpersonal relationships, serves not only as a tool for building trust and collaboration, but also as a key factor in the company's strategic and operational decision-making.

First, guanxi can be seen as a form of social capital that affects business performance. Research shows that companies that have a strong guanxi network tend to have better access to resources and information, which in turn can improve their export performance. In this context, guanxi serves as a mechanism to facilitate organizational learning and innovation, which is especially important in a competitive market. This shows that (Sima et al., 2024) (M. S. Chen & Eweje, 2019) guanxi not only contributes to the relationship between companies, but can also affect the overall business results.

Secondly, guanxi also has significant ethical implications. In the context of Chinese business, guanxi is often associated with practices that can give rise to ethical dilemmas, such as corruption and nepotism. Therefore, it is important to develop a framework that integrates ethical values in the practice of guanxi. Chen and Eweje emphasized that building (L. W. Y. Lee et al., 2022) guanxi grounded in Confucian values such as trust and empathy can help prevent unethical incidents in business practices. This suggests that there is a need to further explore how cultural values can be integrated into business practices to create more sustainable and ethical relationships. (Gulanowski & Zheng, 2024)

Third, guanxi also plays a role in the process of internationalization of Chinese companies. Research shows that guanxi can assist companies in establishing relationships with foreign partners and overcoming challenges related to cultural differences and business practices. This suggests that a deep understanding of (Yang et al., 2024) guanxi can provide a competitive advantage for companies operating in both international and global markets, especially in contexts where interpersonal relationships are highly valued.

Overall, a review of the literature on guanxi in Chinese business practices in international markets provides valuable insights into how interpersonal relationships can affect business strategy and performance. Further research is needed to explore how guanxi can be integrated into management theory and business practices to improve organizational performance in a variety of contexts.

3.5.3 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this literature review are particularly important for companies operating in both international and global contexts, especially in markets influenced by Chinese

culture. Guanxi, which is a network of interpersonal relationships, plays a key role in building trust and collaboration between companies, both domestically and abroad.

First, companies need to understand that guanxi can serve as a strategic tool to improve business performance. Research shows that companies that have a strong guanxi network can access better resources and information, which in turn can improve their export performance. Therefore, companies should actively build and maintain guanxi relationships with business partners, suppliers, and customers to harness this potential. This includes participation in social events, informal business meetings, and other activities that can strengthen interpersonal relationships. (Sima et al., 2024)

Second, guanxi also has implications in human resource management. Research shows that the quality of guanxi between superiors and subordinates can improve employee creativity and performance. Therefore, companies should encourage the positive development (Ni et al., 2024; J. Zhang et al., 2024) of guanxi within their teams. This can be done through training and development that focuses on building mutually beneficial and trust-based relationships among team members.

However, it is important to remember that guanxi can also have dark sides, such as the potential to create corrupt practices or unfairness in business relationships. Therefore, companies should establish clear policies to manage (Abosag et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2024) guanxi in an ethical and responsible manner. emphasized the importance of building M. S. Chen & Eweje (2019) a guanxi that is grounded in ethical values, such as trust and empathy, to prevent unethical incidents in business practices.

In the context of internationalization, guanxi can help Chinese companies adapt to overseas markets. Research shows that companies that have strong guanxi can more easily establish relationships with foreign partners and overcome the challenges associated with cultural differences and business practices. Therefore, a deep understanding of (Chu et al., 2020; Du & Zhou, 2019) guanxi can provide a competitive advantage for companies operating in the international market.

Overall, to utilize guanxi effectively, companies must integrate an understanding of guanxi into their business strategy, both in local and international contexts. This includes building a strong network, managing relationships carefully, and ensuring that guanxi practices are conducted in an ethical and responsible manner. With the right approach, (Du & Zhou, 2019; Wang et al., 2024) guanxi can be a very valuable tool in achieving Chinese business success in both the international and global markets.

3.5.4 Research Gaps

Based on the existing literature review, there are several research gaps that can be identified related to the influence of guanxi in business practices, especially in the context of international markets. Here are some research gaps that can be the focus of future research:

1. Guanxi's Impact on Various Industrial Sectors

Most of the existing research, such as that conducted by , and , focuses on specific sectors such as logistics and tourism. More research is needed to explore how Butt et al. (2020) Sima et al. (2024) C.-H. (Sam) Liu (2021) guanxi functions in other sectors, such as information technology, manufacturing, or healthcare. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relevance of guanxi in various industry contexts.

2. Guanxi's Role in International Relations

Although there is research that discusses guanxi in the context of international business relations, as pointed out by Dan, there is still a lack of understanding of how Du & Zhou (2019)

Ju et al. (2024) guanxi can be adapted and applied in cross-cultural contexts. Further research can explore how Chinese companies can use guanxi to build effective relationships with business partners in countries with different cultures.

3. Guanxi and Innovation

Research by suggests that Xie & Li (2021) guanxi can influence innovation, but little is known about the specific mechanisms that link guanxi to innovation outcomes. Further research can investigate how guanxi facilitates knowledge transfer and collaboration in the context of innovation, as well as how this varies among companies of different sizes and structures.

4. Guanxi in Human Resource Management

Although there are several studies that address guanxi in the context of human resource management, as shown by , there is still room for further research on how Guo et al. (2020) guanxi can be integrated into employee recruitment, development, and retention practices. This research can help in designing more effective management strategies that harness the power of guanxi.

5. Ethics and Guanxi

There is a need to explore more deeply about the ethical aspects of guanxi, especially in the context of international business. Research by shows that there is a potential conflict between M. S. Chen & Eweje (2019) guanxi practices and international business ethics standards. Further research can help understand how companies can balance the use of guanxi with ethical and responsible business practices.

6. The Influence of Technology on Guanxi

With technological advancements and digitalization, there is a need to explore how technology affects guanxi practices. Research by and shows the potential use of L. W. Y. Lee et al. (2022) Rong et al. (2021) big data in understanding guanxi, but more research is needed to understand how technology can be used to build and maintain guanxi networks in the context of modern business.

3.5.5 Future Research Directions

Based on the research gaps that have been identified, here are some future research directions that can be explored:

Topic	Potential Research Questions
Guanxi and Competitive Advantage in the International Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How does guanxi contribute to the competitive advantage of Chinese companies in international expansion?- What is the role of guanxi in reducing uncertainty in the international market for Chinese companies?- How can Chinese companies leverage guanxi to improve access to critical resources in global markets?
Guanxi in a Cross-Cultural Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How can guanxi be adapted and applied in a cross-cultural context in the international market?- What are the challenges that Chinese companies face in building guanxi with business partners in countries with different cultures?- How can an understanding of guanxi help foreign companies in establishing better relationships with Chinese business partners?- How does guanxi facilitate knowledge transfer and collaboration in the context of innovation in Chinese companies?

Guanxi Innovation Business	and in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the mechanisms that connect guanxi to the results of innovation in certain sectors? - How do differences in the structure of guanxi affect the innovation ability of companies in different markets?
Guanxi in Human Resource Management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does guanxi affect the recruitment and retention process of employees in Chinese companies? - What is the impact of guanxi on the relationship between superiors and subordinates in the context of human resource management? - How can companies integrate guanxi principles in employee development practices to improve organizational performance?
Guanxi Ethics International Business Practice	in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do Chinese companies balance the use of guanxi with ethical business practices in the international market? - What is the impact of ethical perceptions on guanxi practices in business relations between Chinese companies and international partners? - How can guanxi be applied ethically in different business contexts, especially in countries with different cultural norms?
The Role of Technology in Guanxi	of in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How has technology affected the practice of guanxi in the context of modern business? - What is the role of big data in understanding and building guanxi in the digital age? - How can companies leverage technology to strengthen their guanxi network in the international market?

Tabel 8. Future Research Directions

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study concluded that guanxi plays an important role in Chinese business practices in the international market. Guanxi plays an important role in strengthening trust between business partners, facilitating innovation, and improving the performance of the company. In complex situations, guanxi helps Chinese companies navigate institutional challenges, understand local regulations, and build mutually beneficial relationships with foreign business partners. In addition, guanxi allows companies to access information and strategic resources that support fast and effective decision-making, thereby creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

Guanxi, as a key concept in Chinese business culture, plays a fundamental role in the business practices of Chinese companies in the international market. Guanxi can not only contribute to the competitive advantage of Chinese companies, but it can also help reduce uncertainty in the global market and improve access to critical resources. More so, guanxi can also affect various aspects of a company's management, such as human resource management, innovation, and ethical practices in the context of international business.

However, the application of guanxi is not without its challenges. Cultural differences and international business norms often lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Therefore, to be able to make optimal use of guanxi, more research is needed to understand how guanxi can be adapted and

applied effectively in diverse cross-cultural contexts. In addition, with the development of technology and digitalization, there is a need to explore how technology can be leveraged to strengthen the guanxi network in modern business practices.

With a deeper understanding of the role of guanxi, Chinese companies can better harness the power of these social connections to increase their competitiveness and success in an increasingly competitive international market.

4.2 Limitations of The Research

Although the existing literature has provided valuable insights into the influence of guanxi on Chinese business practices in the international market, there are some limitations to consider. First, most of the research focuses on the Chinese context and does not adequately consider cultural and contextual differences in other countries. In addition, while this study has also offered important insights into the influence of guanxi on Chinese business practices in international markets, there are some limitations that may affect the understanding of the results. The focused time span, i.e. 2019-2024, may not yet cover guanxi dynamics in a broader historical perspective or previous trends, so there may be some important research missed. The use of Scopus databases with searches based on specific keywords also has the potential to create bias in the selection of literature, as the screening process must meet criteria such as subject areas and document types, which limit the scope of sources. In addition, bibliometric analyses conducted using the VOSviewer software, while providing informative visualizations, may not be able to fully represent the complex relationships between various variables related to guanxi practices in diverse industry or cultural contexts.

4.3 Recommendations

Taking into account the limitations that exist, the study still emphasizes that guanxi is a significant strategic asset in international business practices. Although the data used may not include all relevant literature or trends outside the study time range, the results of this study still provide meaningful insights into the role of guanxi in improving business performance and addressing cross-cultural challenges. Future research can be focused on expanding the scope of data and research, reducing the limitations that have been identified, as well as further exploration of guanxi's relationship with innovation, business ethics, and the application of modern technology. By recognizing these limitations, this study can serve as a foundation for deepening understanding and designing more responsive and effective business strategies in this ever-growing international market.

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